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ABSTRACT

Included in this annotated bibliography of 11 publications are reports asserting that principals primarily are instructional leaders whose training must include a strong mentor relationship and expanded experiential education. Subsequent reports suggest that educational programs should prepare students for the socialization aspects of their future administrative roles, assert that student achievement is the most important outcome of schooling, explore the negative aspects of the reform movement and the imposition of a set of practices and curricula upon principals, address the disagreement among professors regarding an educational administration program due to the diversity of the school leadership role, and encourage the principal education programs to teach those skills specifically required for the administrative profession. The remaining documents reviewed suggest that: school districts should create assistant principal academies; traditional academic programs do not prepare their students for the complex and dynamic situations that principals face; university education departments have not adopted recent insights on principal preparation; and a restructuring of national understanding of future educational leadership requirements must occur. (KM)

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Number 98, September 1989

The Best of ERIC presents annotations of ERIC literature on important topics in educational management.

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management
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Preparation of Principals

1 **Clark, Vivian N.** "The Effectiveness of Case Studies in Training Principals, Using the Deliberative Orientation." *Peabody Journal of Education* 63,1 (Fall 1986): 187-95. EJ 354 956.

In an ideal world principals would be primarily instructional leaders. In reality, says Clark, they "act as managers, politicians, arbitrators, paper-pushers, and scapegoats."

A deliberative style of instruction that considers a variety of views prepares aspiring principals for the varied and complex roles they will play. Case studies should be part of the deliberative style because they are "rich in descriptions and details" and "can provide several topics for discussion, debate, and analysis." Case studies reveal what principalships are actually like. They reveal the job's complexity and the reasons for diverse responses to similar situations.

Clark presents four brief case studies of four diverse schools and their principals to illustrate her thesis. The studies raise stimulating questions: Could the administrator in a school with widespread discipline problems maintain a modicum of order without using a "bullhorn" approach? Are the lack of discipline problems in a more homogeneous and affluent school due to the student body or to its principal's emphasis on reasoning with students rather than punishing them?

Such studies enable aspirants to look at the principalship from many topical angles. They stimulate discussion about how principals discern the proper means for desired ends, handle interruptions and manage time, and bring personal concerns to professional judgments. The continual questioning that reflective analysis of case studies requires well prepares principals to assess and adapt to their dynamic, demanding jobs.

2 **Daresh, John C.** "Mentoring: A Key Feature of the Danforth Program for the Preparation of Principals." Paper presented at the Anniversary Convention of the University Council for Educational Administration, Charlottesville, Virginia, October 1987. 19 pages. ED 287 217.

The Danforth Program for the Preparation of School Principals aims to change the way administrators are educated. Its main concerns are to increase collaboration with school systems and to expand the experiential aspects of future principals' education. Strong mentoring relationships are integral parts of both goals. This paper describes how Ohio State University is developing the mentoring component of its Danforth program.

Daresh notes that mentoring is an old practice that has been particularly common in business, industry, and among women. It has generally been done informally, but increasing numbers of companies and school districts require it. The stereotypical mentor is an older supervisor who provides long-term support to a younger, less experienced protege. Such mentors are often hard to find, however, and it is often more realistic to utilize existing supervisors or hire specialists as mentors.

Mentors in Ohio State's program are expected to be experienced and effective principals who understand the program's goals and can motivate candidates to meet them. They should determine useful activities for and spend time with their candidates, participate in program training, and provide ongoing feedback to both the candidates and the university facilitator on the candidates' progress.

Few mentors will already possess the skills and knowledge to master these varied duties. A week-long institute introduces the mentors to the program and to the concept of mentoring. One particularly effective session features physicians and priests to show how informal and highly structured mentoring relationships function in medicine and religion. The principals also attend several meetings throughout the school year to facilitate continued interaction with university faculty and new ideas.

In retrospect, Daresh believes that Ohio State should have taken more care in selecting mentors and matching them to candidates and that it must allocate more faculty time to the project. Overall, however, he is very pleased with the program and believes it is a harbinger of more ambitious ones.

3 **Dubin, Andrew E.** "Administrative Training: Socializing Our School Leaders." *Planning and Changing* 18,1 (Spring 1987): 33-37. EJ 359 298.

Principals, according to Dubin, are "the hub of the educational wheel that propels a school forward." It is essential, then, that education programs prepare and socialize them for that essential role. They must acquire the necessary value orientations for successful administration.

Yet most administrator education programs stress cognitive

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skills. Aspiring principals take formal course work, complete a short practicum, and document their various assignments to get their degrees. "Unless a candidate offers little energy and commitment to the process," Dubin notes, "he/she is successfully processed through the system." This traditional approach often creates administrators who are insufficiently socialized into the role of school leaders.

Socialization into a particular group occurs by participating and identifying with that group. Experiential interaction, which involves people in pertinent activities, is a particularly effective method to socialize educators into administrative roles. Such interaction can be second-hand, as in case studies, but it is much more effecti e when done directly in practica.

Most practica, however, are not sufficiently detailed or intense. Dubin would have onsite administrators spend much more time with their interns even if universities had to pay for release time. Extensive videotaping can compensate for lack of direct supervision. A videotape of a preobservation conference with a teacher, for example, provides both candidate and academic advisor with a detailed record of how the intern is linking educational theory and practice.

4 **Johnson, William L., and Karolyn J. Snyder.** "Instructional Leadership Training Needs for School Principals." *The Journal of Educational Administration* 24,2 (Summer 1986): 237-53. EJ 350 719.

"Student achievement," the authors assert, "has clearly surfaced as the single most important outcome of schooling." Aspiring principals, therefore, must be intensively trained to assume instructional leadership.

Schools that excel at instruction usually share several key organizational aspects. Their staff strives for improvement by working together collegially and by translating collective concerns into particular goals. Principals conduct frequent observations of teachers and assign both individual and collective responsibility. They lead in program development by providing consistent yet adaptable instruction standards and by involving parents. Successful principals also take pains to assess frequently both staff and student performance.

An elaborate test designed by the authors and tested in the Fort Worth School District reveals that university programs generally do not provide adequate training in the above areas. The sampled administrators generally believed that they needed further training in all seven areas tested for, with issues related to instructional leadership expectations heading the list.

More particular concerns also arose from the survey; many administrators desired further training in shaping and evaluating teacher performance, observation techniques, problem-solving and communication, instructional planning, and personal awareness of their leadership styles.

"Our research," Johnson and Snyder conclude, "demonstrates the readiness of principals to receive training and skill building in all dimensions of instructional leadership."

5 **Lambert, Linda.** "Learning about the Work of a Principal: The Emerging Dilemma." *NASSP Bulletin* 71,495 (January 1987): 59-61. EJ 347 123.

Lambert disagrees with educational reformers who would impose upon principals a set of practices and curricula. That fixed approach suffers from three weaknesses: it assumes that such practices and curricula have been clearly established; that principals become more effective by learning those practices and curricula; and that principals will learn effectively through the delivery of a set curriculum.

Principals are, above all, builders of cultures and ideas who effectively influence a host of people through communication. Hence their work environment should offer autonomy, time for reflection, collegiality, and open, dynamic communication. Static, externally imposed models clash with those requirements.

Lambert admits that outside agencies have much to offer principals. But such organizations must be willing to reexamine their assumptions about effective principals. They must take pains to design programs that elicit ideas from participants, invite teams of leaders rather than just principals, include problem-solving activities, offer reflective and collegial followup activities, use flexible formats, and make participation voluntary. In sum, education agencies much respect administrators' intelligence and autonomy.

6 **Maher, Robert.** "Are Graduate Schools Preparing Tomorrow's Administrators?" *NASSP Bulletin* 72,508 (May 1988): 30-34. EJ 371 970.

School administrators face a host of increasingly complex problems: budget management, substance abuse by students and staff, negotiations with teacher unions, and maintaining positive school climates and images, to name but a few. It is not surprising, therefore, that professors do not agree on a curriculum for educational administrator programs.

Maher surveyed 100 principals and 100 superintendents across the United States to learn what current administrators think should be emphasized in graduate schools. The results of the survey generally bore out his thesis that administrators believe that curricula stressing reflection and theory ill prepare them for jobs that largely consist of never-ending streams of people, problems, and activities.

Indeed, entry-level administrators fresh out of graduate school are most apt to criticize their education; Maher found that central-office administrators were much more satisfied with their graduate training than were building supervisors. Building supervisors also tended to favor technical and practical skills while central office administrators leaned more toward theoretical and philosophical knowledge. Administrators, then, tend to become more satisfied with their graduate school training as their jobs become more reflective and less hectic.

Both types of administrators, however, believe that preparation programs are too general and fragmented. They think that professors need to apply educational theory more often to particular problems and to teach future administrators how to understand and interpret people and organizations.

7 **National Association of Secondary School Principals.** *Performance-Based Preparation of Principals.* Reston, Virginia: NASSP, 1985. 38 pages. ED 257 211.

Programs for educating future principals should teach the skills those students will need in their profession. Yet the NASSP, quoting John R. Holy, finds "little conclusive evidence about the relationship among administrator preparation, work, and effectiveness." This NASSP report is intended to help schools of education to remedy this disparity.

The report acknowledges that aspiring principals require "excellence in the academic and professional dimensions" of their work, but it also advocates "a substantial increase in the field-based component" of preparation programs. This field-based

component, so essential to effective preparation, is traditionally slighted.

Internship programs are the standard means of bridging the gap between classroom instruction and on-the-job performance. Yet traditional internships often do not approximate the depth and breadth of situations a new principal will face. Internships, according to the NASSP, should "be a fulltime experience spanning, ideally, the period of one academic year." Computer simulations, case studies, and project courses are additional ways to bridge the gap between preparation and practice.

The report also discusses methods to analyze programs for training principals. Data from professors, practitioners, and students can be used to rate program areas by generic skills, specific skills, and program modes. This method can enable education schools to identify their strengths and weaknesses as they build more effective programs for preparing principals.

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8 **Peterson, Kent D.; Catherine Marshall; and Terry Grier.** "The Assistant Principals' Academy: Technical Training and Socialization of Future Leaders." *NASSP Bulletin* 71,501 (October 1987): 32-38. EJ 360 724.

The goal of assistant principals' academies, the authors write, "is to work with teachers, central office administrators, and incumbent assistant principals before their administrative role orientations are crystallized, when they are open to innovative ways of filling administrative roles." They argue that districts should strongly consider creating such academies.

The academies can address a host of issues: the organizational frameworks of schools, assistant principals' leadership roles, common problems that assistant principals face, how to create effective schools, and the particular dilemmas assistant principals face, such as separation from former colleagues and how to interview for jobs.

More particular goals include fostering group commitment and career planning. Participants learn how to evaluate themselves and the jobs they covet to see if their aspirations are realistic. They learn how to present themselves and win the attention of superiors.

The first assistant principals' academy, based in North Carolina, consisted of a three-day institute followed by shorter meetings. Instructors utilized lectures, videotapes, readings, simulations, problem-analysis exercises, and role playing. In a session on gender issues, for example, a man played the part of a woman who had to tell "her" superior that she could not attend a school function because of a sick child.

Such training is not without cost or risk. School districts must be willing to allocate substantial money and time. Participants may become frustrated at lack of openings or irritate their superiors by being increasingly assertive.

But the academies excel at identifying, training, and motivating future educational leaders. They can also serve broader educational goals by "shaping a new culture in a school district where norms of performance, professionalism, motivation, and ongoing improvement predominate."

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9 **Schmuck, Richard.** "Beyond Academics in the Preparation of Educational Leaders." *OSSC Report* 28,3 (Spring 1988): 1-11.

This well-organized piece is excerpted from a proposal to the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. It outlines an ambitious two-year program for preparing principals.

Schmuck argues that principals are now expected to lead their schools to marked educational improvement. Such administrators must excel as communicators and leaders. They must, in Schmuck's words, be "flexible, collaborative, empathetic, nondefensive, giving, and committed to excellence and to people." Traditional academic programs seldom produce such principals because they do not prepare their students for the sort of complex and dynamic situations principals face.

The University of Oregon program would address these shortcomings with a rich mix of educational activities. The first year consists largely of eight week-end institutes on several aspects of leadership. They include sessions on problem-solving in meetings, how to understand and change extant organizational cultures in schools, conflict management, life and time management, and a wilderness lab for learning collective problem-solving.

Four summer courses on educational management follow the eight institutes. Students also participate in NASSP's intensive assessment center to measure their skills in twelve key leadership areas.

The keystone of the program occurs during the second year when students serve at least half-time under a skilled administrator. Assignments include extensive shadowing of the mentor and other administrators; eight reflective seminars in which students, mentors, and professors link administrative theory and practice; journal keeping; videotaping; support groups; and participation in a variety of hands-on administration activities. The program concludes with further management courses at the university.

The program, then, mixes conventional academic preparation, collegial seminars, and practical experience under a men-

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tor's close tutelage. Its graduates should know how to meet the principalship's challenges creatively and cooperatively.

10 **Thomson, Scott D.** "The Principalship: Ingredients of Programs to Prepare Effective Leaders." *NASSP Bulletin* 72,508 (May 1988): 39-46. EJ 371 972.

Many university education departments have not adopted recent insights on how to prepare principals. The National Association of Secondary School Principals' executive director attempts to redress that neglect in this article.

Good principals, Thomson asserts, must be competent in three broad areas: management, leadership, and knowledge. Traditional university programs emphasize only the third component and hence produce principals who cannot effectively analyze problems, make decisions, plan, communicate, or lead. Administrators must particularly understand a school's culture and subcultures if they hope to unite its components in a shared goal.

Such understanding requires both teaching experience and intensive internships. The NASSP, writes Thomson, "believes in a year-long exposure to various leadership and management tasks, after certification and experience as a teacher, and before assuming full responsibility for an entire school."

Indeed, he recommends several substantial steps to certification. School administrators should have two years' teaching experience and an advanced degree in educational leadership. That degree should included training in planning, communication, and problem-solving; management of people, services, and facilities; and professional courses in subjects like school law and program design. Aspiring principals should also pass a proficiency exam and serve a one-year residency of at least fifteen hours a week under a state-approved mentor. The residency should entail supervising at least three adults and include practical experience in all major domains of the principalship. This blend of teaching experience, academic preparation, and residency training is essential to preparing effective school administrators.

11 **The University Council for Educational Administration.** *Leaders for America's Schools: The Report of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration.* Tempe, Arizona: UCEA, 1987. 55 pages.

This well-written and carefully organized report is the product of a distinguished twenty-seven-member commission, six regional seminars, and thirty commissioned papers. It calls for "nothing less than the restructuring of a national understanding of requirements for educational leadership of the future."

One of the report's sections treats in some detail the role of administrators in building effective schools. Principals should strive to establish effective learning communities by individualizing instruction, fostering collegiality and cooperation, and encouraging involvement from parents and community.

Universities play a particularly critical role in reforming public school administration. Professors in education departments should be more concerned with teaching administrative than research skills. They should teach students to apply research findings to particular and practical problems and establish supervised practica under strong mentors. Each department should foster collegiality among its students and collaborate closely with the schools.

Many programs are inadequate because of their small size or lack of other critical resources. Yet "surveys indicate that a large percentage of current faculty members consider their programs to be of high quality and see no need for major changes." The commission states that at least 300 of the colleges or universities now preparing administrators should drop their programs. Remaining programs should allocate more time and support to fewer students.

The report also asks public schools, professional organizations, state and federal governments, and private industry to deepen their commitment to preparing administrators.

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